**What Philosophers Have Said?**

1. **Ancient Greece**
2. Plato:

* Ancient Greek philosopher in the fourth century BCE.
* Launched western aesthetic thought. (What is beauty?)
* Believed:
* Works of art should mimic reality and that nature sets the standard of truth and beauty.
* Art is an imitation of reality, therefore never be as good or as meaningful as the real thing.
* Intelligent person should strive to fully understand the eternal world of the soul.
* Artists must be censored and controlled because of their power to influence social attitudes and behavior.
* Favored realistic art. The more realistic a work of art, the greater its appeal.
* Art: tool that can be used to promote non-artistic purposes.
* Good art: promote morally good behavior and show how to live harmoniously. (Set foundation of what is beautiful is also morally good)

1. Aristotle:

* Plato’s student at the School of Athens.
* Disagreed with Plato in the issue of Art.
* Agreed that art is artificial but said that it could be classified and judged according to its physical attributes in much the same way as natural objects or species.
* Argued that art should be free of censorship, independent and autonomous.
* 1st champion of the principle of art for art’s sake.
* Taking a detached aesthetic interest in an art object, without considering its political or moral qualities.

1. **Golden Age (China and India)**
2. Kongfuzi (551-479 BCE) – “Confucius”

* Believed:
* Art- especially poetry- stimulated the mind and taught important social rules.
* Beauty and harmony result from following the rules of propriety.

1. *Peri Hupsous*(On the Sublime)*-* author: unknown Greek writer-A public speaking manual. Introduced the idea that the sublime has great emotional power, yet may be neither logical nor beautiful.

* Ability to appreciate the sublime is a unique characteristic of humans.
* Asked whether artistic creativity can be taught, and if so, how.

1. **European Renaissance (1350-1550)**
2. The idea that artists have special talents emerged.
3. Before this time, artists were considered on the same social level as slaves, serfs, and peasants.
4. Changes:

* Artistic mastery became to be seen as an important element in judging the merit of works of art.
* The more difficult a work to create, the more valuable.
* Michelangelo & da Vinci were seen as geniuses.
* Poetry, painting, acting, building, dancing, and music = fine arts.

1. **17th century (changes direction of aesthetics)**
2. René Descartes

* French philosopher- changed the direction of aesthetics, from investigating beautiful object to investigating the mind that perceived it.
* “Beauty Pleases”
* NEW idea: Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

1. **18th century (aesthetics began to emerge as a separate area of philosophy)**
2. Alexander Baumgarten (German philosopher)- credited with distinguishing aesthetics and giving its name.

* *Aesthetica-* 2 ways of knowing:
* 1- Cognitive (based on reason), analytical, and logical.
* 2- More intuitive, sensuous, and emotional.
* Defined aesthetic as the science of sensitive knowing, maintaining that this way of knowing is completely autonomous.
* Aesthetics does not deal with the nature of social effects of art; rather it is a science that focuses on understanding people’s intuitive, sensuous, and emotional ways of knowing.

1. 2 questions dominated: What is taste? What is an aesthetic experience?

* Taste: refers to a person’s ability to recognize the aesthetic features of an object.
* Challenge: balancing what you like against what others consider good art.

1. David Hume

* Scottish philosopher
* Argued that principles of taste are universal
* Essay: “Of the Standard of Taste”- (says that even though principles are universal, only few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art)
* Q: If universal standards of taste exist, why are there differences of opinion over what constitutes good art?
* Different point of view arise because:

1. People may lack the delicacy of imagination to make accurate judgments
2. They may be influenced by their own prejudices.
3. Immanuel Kant- German philosopher

* *The Critique of Judgment:* (2 important concepts)

1. Theory of taste
2. Aesthetic experience (identified the pleasure-that comes from a kind of free play of understanding and imagination- felt when making a judgment of taste).

* Art is autonomous, or independent.
* Aesthetic judgments should exclude the subject matter of the work & sense qualities.
* Art must NOT be judged in relation to anything other than itself and its own form (formal properties that make an artwork a poem, novel, painting, building or piece of music.)🡪 Laid groundwork for formalist movement.
* Supporters: focused on form and how people experience it.

1. **19th Century**
2. Georg W.F. Hegel (German philosopher)

* Everything in the world progresses 3 stages (repeats):

1. Thesis: idea or a historical movement.
2. Antithesis: a conflicting idea or movement that develops in reaction to the thesis.
3. Synthesis: resolves the conflict between thesis and antithesis by reconciling the truth found in both. And this becomes a NEW thesis.

* Art as the thesis, and early stage in the development of human thought.
* Antithesis of art is religion- expresses ideas as images or symbols.
* Philosophy is the synthesis that reconciles art and religion through pure thought.
* Messages of art clear until work is complete.
* Creating art 2 stages:

1. Creating an image of the work in the mind’s eye of the artist.
2. The artist’s creation of the physical manifestation of this image.

* Supporters: emphasized the meaning and interpretation of the ideas expressed in art.

1. Friedrich Nietzsche- German philosopher

* Brilliant writer- often used vivid images to persuade other to look at things in a new way.
* His books are considered works of art. (*Human, All Too Human*)
* Art is the real expression of truth.
* Art transforms life by providing people with a powerful, life-affirming view of the world.
* Believed: rational philosophy and Christianity had combined to crush people’s zest for lie.
* Supported Plato’s idea that passion and reason, art and philosophy are ALWAYS in conflict.

(Plato: chose reason and philosophy; Nietzsche chose passion and art.)

1. John Dewey

* Influence in education
* Rejected belief that knowledge consists of impersonal, unquestionable well-established facts
* People acquired knowledge by participating in its creation: “learning by doing”
* Art enables people to express hopes, dreams and important things to them
* Art becomes meaningful only when experienced by an audience, then becomes work of art

1. **18th, 19th, 20th century ideas gave rise to Modernism**
2. Modernism: attempts to define nature of the aesthetic experience

* Works of art are successful when they create a sense of unity
* Works of art are autonomous and pure

1. **Modernism gives way to post-modernism**
2. Post modernists reject what modernists have to say
3. Post modernist Arthur Danto:

* Art is dead
* From Plato to camera creation, humans create art that represented the world
* Art styles came and went; philosophers tried to keep up by creating new definitions of art
* Artists hence became philosophers and art became attempt of artist to understand themselves
* So, artists can create whatever they want without adhering to ideas of what art should be.